

be promulgated by the Secretary of Labor; and

- (4) the employer, excluding any licensed health care professionals that are involved in the genetic monitoring program, receives results of the monitoring only in aggregate terms that do not disclose the identity of specific employees.

(e) This order does not limit the statutory authority of a Federal department or agency to:

- (1) promulgate or enforce workplace safety and health laws and regulations;
- (2) conduct or sponsor occupational or other health research that is conducted in compliance with regulations at part 46 of title 45, of the Code of Federal Regulations; or
- (3) collect protected genetic information as a part of a lawful program, the primary purpose of which is to carry out identification purposes.

Sec. 4. Miscellaneous.

1–401. The head of each department and agency shall take appropriate action to disseminate this policy and, to this end, shall designate a high level official responsible for carrying out its responsibilities under this order.

1–402. Nothing in this order shall be construed to:

(a) limit the rights or protections of an individual under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 701, *et seq.*), the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a), or other applicable law; or

(b) require specific benefits for an employee or dependent under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program or similar program.

1–403. This order clarifies and makes uniform Administration policy and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by a party against the United States, its officers or employees, or any other person.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
February 8, 2000.

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NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on February 10.

**Remarks on Presenting the
Congressional Medal of Honor
to Alfred Rascon**

February 8, 2000

The President. Colonel, thank you for that prayer. General Hicks, Secretary Cohen, Secretary West, Secretary Richardson, Secretary Caldera, General Shelton, General Ralston, members of the Joint Chiefs, all the Members of Congress who are here—and we have quite a distinguished array of them. We thank them all for coming. I'd like to ask the Members of Congress who are here to stand so you'll see how many we have. We're very grateful to you for your presence here. Thank you.

When the Medal of Honor was conceived in 1861, some Americans actually worried that it might be a bad thing, that the medals would be seen as somehow too aristocratic, and that there was no need for them in a genuinely democratic society. Today, we award the Medal of Honor, secure in the knowledge that people like Alfred Rascon have kept our democracy alive all these years.

We bestow the medal knowing that America would not have survived were it not for people like him, who, generation after generation, have always renewed the extraordinary gift of freedom for their fellow citizens.

Under any circumstances, a Medal of Honor ceremony is an event of great importance. Today it is especially so: for the rare quality of heroism on display that long-ago day in 1966; for the long, patient wait for recognition; for Alfred's decision to devote his life both before and after 1966 to a nation he was not born in.

Alfred Rascon was born in Mexico on September 10, 1945, just 8 days after the formal surrender ending World War II. When he was very young, his parents came to America for a better chance. They ended up in Oxnard, north of Los Angeles. And when Alfred started grade school, he still spoke not

a word of English. He grew up near three military bases and fell in love with the Armed Forces. At the advanced age of 7, wanting to do his part to defend America, he built a homemade parachute and jumped off the roof of his house. *[Laughter]* Unfortunately, in his own words, the chute had a “total malfunction”—*[laughter]*—and he broke his wrist.

But as usual, he was undeterred. Soon he graduated from high school and enlisted in the United States Army. Appropriately, he became a medic for a platoon of paratroopers, the first of the 503d Airborne Battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade. He explained, “I wanted to give back something to this country and its citizens for the opportunities it had given me and my parents. Those paratroopers who served with me in the reconnaissance platoon knew nothing of my immigrant status. It was never an issue. They simply knew me as Doc.”

Alfred’s platoon was sent to Vietnam in May of 1965, part of the first Army combat unit there. On March 16th, 1966, they were in Long Khanh Province, helping another platoon that was pinned down by the enemy. In his words, it was “10 minutes of pure hell.”

In the middle of an intense firefight, Alfred was everywhere. While attending to a fatally wounded machine gunner, Private William Thompson, he was hit with shrapnel and shot in the hip. The bullet went parallel to his spine and came out by his shoulder. Ignoring his own wounds, he then brought desperately needed ammo to another machine gunner, Private Larry Gibson. Several grenades then landed nearby. One of them ripped his mouth open. When he saw another land near Private Neil Haffey, he covered him with his body, absorbing the brunt of the blast. Yet another grenade landed near Sergeant Ray Compton, and Alfred covered him, too. Then, barely able to walk, bleeding from his ears and nose, he ran to recover a machine gun that the enemy was about to capture. The extra firepower kept the enemy from advancing, and Alfred Rascon saved his platoon.

Through this extraordinary succession of courageous acts, he never gave a single thought to himself, except, he admits, for the instant when the grenade exploded near his

face and he thought, “Oh, God, my good looks are gone.” *[Laughter]* I’m not much of an expert, but I would say you were wrong about that, Captain. *[Laughter]* You look just fine here today.

On that distant day, in that faraway place, this man gave everything he had, utterly and selflessly, to protect his platoon mates and the Nation he was still not yet a citizen of. Later he said with characteristic modesty, “I did it because I had to do it, and that’s all there is to it.” He said, “I don’t consider myself a hero. Anybody in combat would do the same thing for their buddies and friends. We were all colorblind. We were all different nationalities. The important thing is that we were Americans fighting for America.”

I want to stop just for a moment to salute all the other Americans who did that in Vietnam. We want to honor you today, along with Alfred. Many of you were there with him. And I’d like for all of you to stand or, if you can’t stand, lift your arms and be recognized. We want to acknowledge you today, please. *[Applause]*

Alfred Rascon was so badly wounded that day he was actually given last rites. After a long convalescence, he pulled through, and he continued to serve his country. He became a citizen in 1967. He rejoined the Army as an officer. In 1972 he volunteered for a second tour in Vietnam. And in 1983 he began working for the Justice Department. Today, he is the Inspector General of the Selective Service System, helping to make sure that others will be there to defend America as he did.

Looking at his lifetime of service to our Nation, it would be hard to imagine a better definition of citizenship. So I would like to also take a moment, sir, to thank your parents, Alfredo and Andrea, for teaching their son the values of good citizenship. And we would all like to welcome your wife, Carol, and your children, Amanda and Alan. They must be so very proud of you today. We welcome you here.

Now, here’s a story of how we all came here. Alfred Rascon was given a Silver Star for his valor that day in 1966. But the request for his Medal of Honor somehow got lost in a thicket of redtape. His platoon mates persisted, showing as much loyalty to him as

he had shown to them. Thanks to them, after 34 years, I am proud to present you with our Nation's highest honor.

Since the creation of the Medal of Honor, roughly one in five of them have been awarded to immigrants. Today, there are over 60,000 immigrants protecting the United States in our military.

Alfred was once asked why he volunteered to join and to go to Vietnam when he was not even a citizen. And he said, "I was always an American in my heart."

Alfred Rascon, today we honor you as you have honored us, by your choice to become an American and your courage in reflecting the best of America. You said that you summoned your courage for your platoon because "you've got to take care of your people." That's a pretty good credo for all the rest of us, as well.

On behalf of all Americans, and especially on behalf of your platoon members who are here today, I thank you for what you mean to our country. Thank you for what you gave that day and what you have given every day since. Thank you for reminding us that being American has nothing to do with the place of your birth, the color of your skin, the language of your parents, or the way you worship God. Thank you for living the enduring American values every day. Thank you for doing something that was hard because no one else was there to do it. Thank you for looking out for people when no one else could be there for them.

You have taught us once again that being American has nothing to do with the place of birth, racial, ethnic origin, or religious faith. It comes straight from the heart. And your heart, sir, is an extraordinary gift to your country.

Commander, please read the citation.

[At this point, Comdr. Michael M. Gilday, USN, Navy Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medal. Alfred Rascon made brief remarks.]

The President. I want to thank you all again for being here today and invite you to join our honoree and his family in a reception in the State Dining Room at the end of the hall. Thank you very much, and welcome.

But don't leave until we have the benediction. *[Laughter]*

General Hicks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Col. Frank Vavrin, USA (Ret.), Chaplain Corps, 503d Airborne Battalion, who gave the invocation; and Brig. Gen. David Hicks, USA, Deputy Chief of Chaplains. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Alfred Rascon.

Statement on the Election of Stipe Mesic as President of Croatia

February 8, 2000

I congratulate President-elect Stipe Mesic on his victory in Monday's elections in Croatia. Mr. Mesic's victory is a turning point for Croatia. It brings with it the promise of genuine democracy and a normal life for Croatia's people, stronger ties between our two nations, and greater stability throughout southeast Europe. The people of Croatia have clearly demonstrated their desire to see their country take its rightful place in Europe. The United States will do everything it can to help them reach their destination. And together we will send a clear message to all the people of the Balkans that a brighter future is within their grasp.

I look forward to working closely with President-elect Mesic, Prime Minister Racan, and the new government in Zagreb.

NOTE: In the statement, the President referred to Prime Minister Ivica Racan of Croatia.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception

February 8, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you, John. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here tonight and for your support for our party. I wanted to just say a few words, and then we'll visit a little.

I did put out the budget yesterday. And I've had a great week. We had the State of the Union, and then I went to Switzerland, to Davos, to the International Economic